

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the reasons that follow.

Status of Claims:

No claims are currently being added, cancelled or amended.

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claims remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

Claims 1-16 remain pending in this application.

Claim Rejections – Prior Art:

In the Office Action, claims 1 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0192519 to Fujita et al. in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0115487 to Ichinose et al.; and claims 2-8 and 10-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujita et al. in view of Ichinose et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0024746 to Ueda et al. and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/00646697 to Sugiura et al. These rejections are traversed for at least the reasons given below.

The present application is a national stage of PCT application PCT/JP2003/016093 filed on December 16, 2003, which itself claims priority to Japanese Patent Application 2002-374433 filed on December 25, 2002.

The Ichinose et al. reference was filed on December 9, 2003. Accordingly, due to the filing of a verified translation of Japanese Patent Application 2002-374433, so as to perfect Applicant's claim for priority, Applicant has antedated the filing date of Ichinose et al., whereby that reference can no longer be applied as prior art to the present application.

Accordingly, the presently pending claims are patentable over the cited art of record.

Conclusion:

Since all of the issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed in this Reply, Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing or a credit card payment form being unsigned, providing incorrect information resulting in a rejected credit card transaction, or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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